

The avifauna of Ghana: additions and corrections

Robert J. Dowsett^a, Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire^a and Andrew Hester^b

L'avifaune du Ghana: additions et corrections. Cet article présente une mise à jour de la liste des oiseaux du Ghana depuis Dowsett (1993). En tout 22 espèces et une sous-espèce sont ajoutées ou confirmées, mais 24 espèces doivent être supprimées ou mises en doute. Le nom d'une espèce a changé : la Cisticole de Dorst *Cisticola guinea* (au lieu de Cisticole à tête rousse *C. ruficeps*).

Summary. This article brings up to date the list of the birds of Ghana (Dowsett 1993). In all, 22 species and one subspecies are added or confirmed, but 24 species should be rejected or questioned. The name of one species has changed: Dorst's Cisticola *Cisticola guinea* (instead of Red-pate Cisticola *C. ruficeps*).

The birds of Ghana have received a good deal of attention in recent years by a number of experienced observers, and it has become clear that there is much in the standard works (e.g. Grimes 1987, Ntiemoa-Baidu *et al.* 2001) that needs updating or correcting. AH has lived in Ghana since April 2004, and has travelled widely; RJD & FD-L have spent a total of almost 8 months in the field (7 July–11 September 2004, 17 December 2004–5 April 2005, and 22 February–7 April 2008), during which time they surveyed all of the protected areas managed by the Ghana Wildlife Division.

Pending completion of a detailed review of distribution and status, we present here what we believe should be additions to or deletions from the avifauna of Ghana (Grimes 1987, as amended by Dowsett 1993). We deal with 22 species (and one subspecies) which are additions or confirmations for the Ghana list, and a further 24 species which we recommend be considered erroneous or in need of supporting details. We also draw attention here to an important name change: Dorst's Cisticola *Cisticola guinea* is the same bird as that called Red-pate Cisticola *Cisticola ruficeps* by Grimes (1987), see Dowsett-Lemaire *et al.* (2005).

The current Ghana avifauna consists of 732 species. Coordinates are given for localities not mentioned in Grimes (1987). Abbreviations are: NP/PN for National Park and FR for Forest Reserve.

Additions to the avifauna of Ghana

Ntiemoa-Baidu *et al.* (2000a) comment that African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro* 'was recorded for the first time for Ghana' during their field work; this is incorrect, for it has long been known

(often as *A. toussenelii*), and we have 40 localities on file, from Cape Three Points north to Kyabobo (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2005, 2007) and Wenchi (Grimes 1987).

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

AH had good views of up to 15 birds a few km off Ada in April 2005. Two were reportedly well seen off Ada, on 13 November 1994, with a large flock of Black Terns *Chlidonias niger* (J. Simms in *Bull. ABC* 2: 62). This Palearctic migrant is known from several West African countries.

Western Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

Helsens (1996) reported a single male at Elmina, in April 1993, and van den Brink *et al.* (1998) up to 15 birds on three dates during the period 7–27 December 1996, at Legon, Buiepe and Accra-Elmina. One was also seen at Sakumo Lagoon, near Accra, date not available, by H. Fletcher (pers. comm. to AH). This Palearctic migrant has been reported in small numbers from most parts of West Africa.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae*

An all-black falcon was seen in flight and at rest along the Volta lakeshore, in Digya NP, at Daditokolo (07°42'N 00°09'W) on 22–23 January 2005. RJD had close views of it at rest and in flight. It was long-winged and long-tailed, the underwing showing a marked contrast between the black coverts and paler flight-feathers. It was thus Eleonora's rather than the similar Sooty Falcon *F. concolor* (which is also less likely geographically). An Eleonora's Falcon ringed in the Canary Islands was recovered in Mali (at Doura: 14°59'N 05°12'W) on 7 March (Delgado &

Figure 1a and b. American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, Sakumono lagoon, Ghana, 17 February 2008 (Tony Traub-Evans).

Pluvier bronzé *Pluvialis dominica*, lagune de Sakumono, Ghana, 17 février 2008 (Tony Traub-Evans).

Figure 2. Barred Owllet *Glaucidium capense* perched in a large *Ceiba* tree in Afadjato hill forest, Ghana, 2 April 2008 (Tony Traub-Evans).

Chevêchette du Cap *Glaucidium capense* perchée dans un grand *Ceiba* dans la forêt du Mont Afadjato, Ghana, 2 avril 2008 (Tony Traub-Evans).

Figure 3. Map of distribution (30' squares) in Upper Guinea of Barred Owllet *Glaucidium capense*. '?' denotes a published record considered in need of confirmation (Lachenaud 2006).

Distribution (par carrés de 30') de la Chevêchette du Cap *Glaucidium capense* en Afrique Occidentale. '?' désigne une donnée publiée qui nécessite confirmation (Lachenaud 2006).

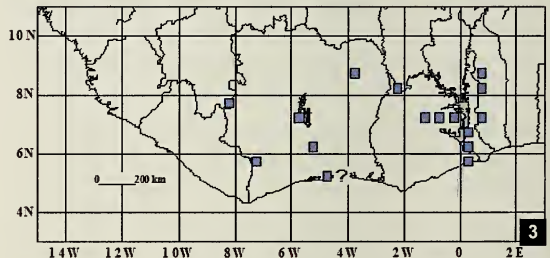
Quilis 1990), on a direct line between north-west Africa and the wintering area in Madagascar. One is also reported to have been filmed in Mt. Péko NP, Côte d'Ivoire (07°05'N 07°13'W), in March (G. Rondeau in *Bull. ABC* 8: 147).

Buff-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura elegans*

C. Carter (*in litt.* 2005) heard two of this species calling at night at Ntronang (06°21'N 01°05'W) on 8 May 1995; one of them called incessantly for at least two hours from 22.30 hrs and again at dawn. He was extremely familiar with it in Zambia and Zaïre. L. Carter (pers. comm. to C. Carter) had heard it regularly there at night from 30 April, and it was last heard at dawn on 11 May. Grimes (1987) accepted a nocturnal sound record from near Tarkwa, even though the description 'does not tally completely' with published accounts, but that report was not accepted by Keith *et al.* (1970) and was queried by Dowsett (1993). The present record is the first between Ubiaja, Nigeria (06°37'N 06°20'E) (Bannerman 1935) and Mt. Sangbé NP, Côte d'Ivoire (07°55'N 07°17'W) (H. Rainey in *Bull. ABC* 10: 57).

Red-chested Flufftail *Sarothrura rufa*

One was calling from a large reedbed at a gold mine detention pond near Obuasi, mid-May 2007 (AH, who is familiar with the species in South Africa). Already known from neighbouring Togo



(Cheke & Walsh 1996), but otherwise the nearest record is of a male observed at Fadar Fadar, Burkina Faso (c.15°N 00°40'W) (Weesie 1996), surprisingly far north. There is no certain record from Côte d'Ivoire (Thiollay 1985).

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

Two were well seen in rice fields c.50 km east of Accra, on 12–13 November 2005 (AH, H. Fletcher & C. Pearman). Up to four were present at Sakumono lagoon, Tema (05°37'N 00°02'W)

and Prampram between 3 November 2007 and 28 February 2008, one of them in partial breeding dress by February (AH, RJD, FD-L *et al.*), and photographs by T. Traub-Evans (Fig. 1) show clearly the key features of the species (marked supercilium, buffy chest and grey underwing-coverts). Macdonald (1978—not 1987, as in Grimes 1987) claimed one from Nakwa lagoon (05°12'N 00°56'W), on 4 October 1977, but Dowsett (1993) considered the details insufficient to be sure of the species.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

The first for Ghana was a female in almost full breeding plumage at Sakumono lagoon, on 22 July 2004 (AH). One was at the same place on 5 December 2004 (AH), and another was at Panbros saltworks (05°31'N 00°19'W), on 15 January 2006 (AH, H. Fletcher & P. Samuels).

Barred Owlet *Glaucidium capense*

RJD & FD-L found this owlet in 2004–08 in eight protected areas, from Shai Hills Resource Reserve north to Kyabobo NP (c.08°45'N 00°45'E) and west to Bui NP (08°21'N 02°18'W) (Fig. 3: 10 × 30' squares). It was tape-recorded and seen on 17 January 2005, in the south-east of Kogyae Strict Nature Reserve (Kyariase: 07°12'N 01°02'W), singing at dawn in a patch of transition woodland, with a pocket of dry forest (*Anogeissus* and *Manilkara*) on the edge of a banana farm. In 2008 we saw and heard it in the eastern highlands, and it was photographed by T. Traub-Evans in the open canopy of dry semi-evergreen forest at Afadjato (07°01'N 00°34'E; Fig. 2). The first records for Ghana of a species with a limited distribution in West Africa (Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia), the nearest known locality hitherto being Comoé NP (c.08°45'N 03°45'W) in Côte d'Ivoire (Salewski 2000). All localities are within the forest/savanna transition zone, the habitat being the edge of riparian or gallery forest (Wli Falls, Kalakpa, Kyabobo, south of Bui NP), dry forest (Shai Hills, Afadjato, Amedzofe) and transition *Daniellia* woodland with a few forest trees (Kogyae, Digya, Kyabobo—see also Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2007). The vocal dialect fits that of the race *etchecopari* published by Chappuis (1978, 2000); *cf.* sonograms in Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1993). This race differs only

slightly in size and the markings on the upperparts, features not visible in the field.

African Black Swift *Apus barbatus*

At least four swifts of this species were identified flying high across the Pru River (07°56'N 01°09'W) on 14 March 2008 (FD-L). They were similar to Common Swifts *A. apus* in size and shape, identification being based on their distinctive calls (characteristic, buzzing trills), with which FD-L has been familiar since 1976. FD-L and RJD saw 25–35 African Black Swifts near the peak of Mt. Afadjato in eastern Ghana on 2 April 2008. Most were circling over a rocky hill (Aduadu) to the north of Afadjato, at an altitude of 800 m. Some pairs were interacting and calling. It is likely that the eastern highlands of Ghana (and adjacent Togo) have a small breeding population, hitherto unknown. There are possible sight records from Togo (Cheke & Walsh 1996), as close to Afadjato as Evou Apegamé (07°32'N 01°02'E, not 00°02'E as published). This represents a major range extension, as the nearest population is in the highlands of the Nimba range (Gatter 1993).

Horus Swift *Apus horus*

At least two, seen by RJD & FD-L over the southern boundary road of Mole NP (c.09°13'N 01°57'W), on 13 August 2004, next to African White-rumped Swift *A. caffer*, were identified by the only moderately forked tail but far more extensive white rump than *A. caffer*. One seen by the same observers low over the water at Dam 1, Mole NP (09°16'N 01°51'W), on 9 March 2005. These sightings extend the range from southern Niger (Tapoa in PN du W, at 12°15'N 02°15'E: Crisler *et al.* 2003). This species breeds in large sand cliffs (often in bee-eater holes) and could be more widespread in West Africa.

Mountain Wagtail *Motacilla clara*

We do not share the misgivings of Grimes (1987) regarding C. M. Morrison's confident report of one seen at a waterfall near Begoro, subject to the usual caveat regarding single-observer sight records. This bird is not montane in West Africa (as Grimes suggested), and is known from several similar sites in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire (e.g. Thiollay 1985).

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Plat (1997) saw two (one almost fully adult) just east of Bolgatanga, i.e. on the Atamore River (10°47'N 00°51'W), on 12–13 February 1997. This is about as far south as the species is likely to winter in West Africa. Grimes's (1987) inclusion of this wagtail on the Ghana list results from his considering it to be conspecific with African Pied Wagtail *M. aguimp*.

Lowland Akalat *Sheppardia cyornithopsis*

A female was mist-netted, ringed and photographed, on 7 February 2005, near a stream at an upland site (above 700 m) in the Atewa Range FR (RJD, FD-L). The bird had an active brood patch, and thus was brooding nestlings (eggs would have been laid January); wing-length 69.5 mm, weight 17 g (18 birds ringed in west-central Africa had wings ranging from 66.5–78.0 mm, mean 72 mm; RJD pers. obs.). AH had brief, but good, views of a single bird on 20 October 2006 in the same area of the Atewa Hills, and excellent views of another halfway up the northern side of the range, on 26 August 2007.

This akalat occurs in neighbouring countries immediately west of Ghana (Côte d'Ivoire to Liberia, Sierra Leone and southern Guinea). A specimen from Atewa, claimed as Equatorial Akalat *S. aequatorialis* by Ntiamoa-Baidu *et al.* (2000b), was subsequently identified, by J. Fjeldså, as a Lowland Akalat (J. Fjeldså *in litt.* 1997); Roy *et al.* (2001) later confirmed that the specimen was unquestionably *S. cyornithopsis*, based on analysis of its DNA (see rejected species below).

Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala*

Heard by RJD & FD-L singing in dense *Typha* reedbeds on the far side of the lake at Owabi Wildlife Sanctuary (06°45'N 01°43'W) on 11 January 2005. The songster was too distant to be tape-recorded, but the observers are familiar with its song from several countries in Africa, including Zambia, Malaŵi and Cameroon. AH has heard this species on numerous occasions throughout the year, in dense reedbeds at the northern end of Sakumono lagoon, east of Accra, and RJD heard it there on 28 February 2008.

This warbler of dense aquatic vegetation is widespread in tropical and southern Africa but tends to become scarce west of Cameroon. It is

known from few sites in Nigeria and has only recently been identified in southern Togo (Selfe 2003). Further west there is only a possible record of a singing bird from Ferkessédougou, northern Côte d'Ivoire (09°24'N 05°14'W) (Thiollay 1985), which that author considered unconfirmed.

It was not listed for Ghana by Grimes (1987), even though Chappuis (1978) had published a good tape-recording of the song said to have been obtained in Ghana by Grimes. However, L. G. Grimes (*in litt.* 2006) informs us that this recording came in fact from Cameroon, not Ghana, and is that originally attributed to *B. lopezi camerunensis* (Grimes 1971) but corrected to *B. baboecala* (Grimes 1972). The Owabi and Sakumono records are thus the first for the country.

African Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (*baeticatus*-group)

Quite common in rank, moist grass on the Volta lakeshore at Walando (Digya NP: 07°38'N 00°20'W) in January 2005, but less numerous than European birds (RJD, FD-L). The two taxa were well seen side by side, and both were mist-netted and ringed: five of the local race of *baeticatus*, *cinnamomeus*, were in fresh plumage, one (female) apparently fattening as if to lay (weighing 14.4 g) had not yet developed a brood patch. There are few West African records of the *baeticatus*-group between Lake Chad and Senegal. Treated by some authors as a separate species, but a molecular study (Parkin *et al.* 2004) has confirmed the morphological and behavioural evidence for them being conspecific (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1987).

Nimba Flycatcher *Melaenornis annamarulae*

Confirmation of the presence of this semi-montane Upper Guinea endemic in the Atewa Range has been documented elsewhere (Demey & Hester 2008). This is the easternmost record of the species, the nearest of several localities in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire being Mopri FR (05°50'N 04°55'W) (Gartshore *et al.* 1995).

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

On 15 March 2005 an adult male (all-black wings) was seen in woodland near Gruppe (09°13'N 02°13'W), just beyond the southern boundary of Mole NP (RJD, FD-L). AH observed

a male on 3 April 2007 in almost the same area, south of the southern boundary of Mole NP. One male was seen in the west of Digya NP (07°23'N 00°37'W) on 8 March 2008 (FD-L). The first admissible records for Ghana, as Grimes (1987) did not accept a sighting of a female near Legon.

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*

One in non-breeding plumage was seen closely at Dansoman, Accra (05°33'N 00°12'W), around 1 July 2003 (Hobberstad 2008). This is the only record we know of between the Lake Chad area, Nigeria (Ottosson *et al.* 2002) and The Gambia (Gore 1990), but the species is prone to vagrancy, having even reached the Seychelles and Aldabra occasionally (Skerrett *et al.* 2001).

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*

One photographed at Labadi Beach (05°33'N 00°09'W), Accra, on 21 July–1 August 2001 (A. Johnston, in *Bull. ABC* 9: 68 & in *litt.* to P. W. Atkinson), was either ship-assisted or an escape from captivity. This is the first report of this undesirable alien species in West Africa.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*

AH observed the species on a few occasions in September 2006 (5–6 in a group) near Sunyani, in mixed agricultural land and modified grassland. Sight records from three localities (Winterbottom in Bannerman 1949, Sutton 1965), including Winterbottom's from Sunyani, were rejected by Grimes (1987) as probably referring to Black-rumped Waxbill *E. troglodytes*. However, he accepted a single sighting from Tumu (the reference is not Sutton 1965, as might be inferred from Grimes, but Sutton 1970), on the grounds that the observer also reported *E. troglodytes* commonly. There is clearly a population at least in the Sunyani area of central-west Ghana, and the species is also reported from several places in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire (e.g. Thiollay 1985). A report of three in Accra on 9 January 2006 (R. Cruse in *Bull. ABC* 13: 102) must surely refer to escaped cagebirds.

Cameroon Indigobird *Vidua camerunensis*

Specimens from Mole and Damongo, apparently attributed by Payne (1982) to another *Vidua*, were subsequently identified as *V. camerunensis* (R. B. Payne in Fry & Keith 2004). Several males singing

in the south of Mole NP in August 2004 produced clear imitations of Black-bellied Firefinch *Lagonosticta rara* (FD-L).

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

An adult male was filmed at Mole motel by several observers on 23 March 2006 (Lister 2007), a further record indicative of the winter range of this Palearctic migrant (McGregor 2004).

Species whose claimed occurrence in Ghana is erroneous or needs confirmation

We consider below species that were accepted by Grimes (1987), but which we think there is reason to doubt, as well as records that have appeared subsequently in print, and which might be thought to be candidates for the Ghanaian List, but which remain unconfirmed.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Gordon (1992) reported 43 sightings on a total of 37 days in the Amansuri wetlands, on the southwest coast. No dates or other details are given and no mention is made of the fact that this species is known in West Africa only as an extreme vagrant to a few Sahelian countries (Borrow & Demey 2001). This record is surely in error.

Olive Ibis *Bostrychia olivacea*

Grimes (1987) included this species on the basis of a single sight record, at the ferry on the Kade–Akropong road (this is the Akropong at 06°12'N 00°39'W, not the better known locality in Akwapim, and the ferry was on the Birrim River). However, the observer himself wrote 'this identification is not certain' (Holman 1947: 626); his description of the voice could apply to either this species or to Spot-breasted Ibis *B. rara*, and the latter in the field is not the 'appreciably smaller bird' that he felt published descriptions implied. We cannot eliminate the possibility that these were *B. rara*, known with certainty from ten places in Ghana, including Atewa Range FR (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2005), a few km east of Holman's locality. Spot-breasted Ibis ranges from Cape Three Points north to the Sene River at 07°30'N 00°54'W (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2005; pers. obs.). The voice of *B. rara* was tape-recorded on 6 May 2007 by B. Phalan (pers. comm.) at Bonsa River FR (05°15'N 02°10'W). We believe there is no completely acceptable

record of *B. olivacea* in West Africa between Yapo, Côte d'Ivoire (05°42'N 04°06'W) (Demey & Fishpool 1991) and Campo, Cameroon (02°22'N 09°49'E) (R. Demey pers. comm.). A recent report from south-east Nigeria (A. Ajagbe *et al.*, in *Bull. ABC* 12: 187) remains to be documented.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

The sighting of an adult along the Mole scarp on 9 August 1968 (Harvey & Harrison 1970) should not be accepted as the only record for Ghana in the absence of supporting information, despite its inclusion by Grimes (1987). The species is unlikely to occur substantially south of the Sahel.

Rüppell's Griffon Vulture *Gyps rueppellii*

Grimes (1987) mentioned an 'uncertain' sighting of one in Mole, on 11 January (Sutton 1970), but it, and even more so an undocumented sighting in the forest zone of southern Ghana, seems not to warrant inclusion on the Ghana List without convincing details. Both this species and the last were rejected from Mole by Greig-Smith (1976).

Black-rumped (Hottentot) Buttonquail *Turnix hottentottus*

A specimen was reported from Accra (Bannerman 1931: 308, not p. 487 as in Grimes 1987), and Maze (1971) claimed to have seen five in Mole NP in April, but these should not be accepted in the absence of supporting details. This intra-African migrant (of which there are few authentic West African records) is readily misidentified.

Nubian Bustard *Neotis nuba*

'Vagrant, the one record in the Shai Hills is way south of its normal range: identified by Game Wardens, 30 Mar 1968' (Grimes 2005). The occurrence of this Sahel species is extremely unlikely, and identification by GWD staff undoubtedly mistaken.

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*

Van Gastel & van Gastel (1999) thought they saw this Palearctic migrant on the coast east of Prampram on 19 May 1996; we have reservations, and would retain the record in square brackets, as there is no other indication that the species occurs south of the Sahel.

European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* and **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*

Grimes (1987) placed all reports of golden plovers under one heading (i.e. *Pluvialis apricaria*, *P. fulva* and *P. dominica*). One record identified as *P. apricaria* from Songaw lagoon (05°49'N 00°28'E), on 16 January 1986, cannot be accepted, notwithstanding that one of the observers was very experienced. Nor do we think a report of 'presumed' *P. fulva* at Nungua, on 2 April 1966, meets the criteria sufficient to eliminate other species. These three species can be difficult to separate, and any one could occur in West Africa (although *P. apricaria* would seem the least likely as far south as the coast of Ghana, and there have since been acceptable records of *P. dominica*, see above). Both *P. fulva* and *dominica* are reported from Côte d'Ivoire (Demey & Fishpool 1991).

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*

Macdonald (1977) reported a sighting from Iture, which he took to be this species rather than the very similar Long-billed Dowitcher *L. scolopaceus* on the basis of its call. Although Grimes (1987) mentioned that T. Inskipp considered the details insufficient to make identification certain, he nevertheless accepted the record. The description published is certainly slight for such a difficult to identify, extreme rarity, and the voice as described would seem perhaps more likely to refer to *L. scolopaceus*. Under the circumstances, it now seems best to treat the record as a *Limnodromus* sp.

Pennant-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx vexillarius*

Grimes (1987) rejected this intra-African migrant on the basis of an out-of-season (early February) sighting at Accra. Similarly, its listing from Shai Hills by Rice (n.d.)—a reference not mentioned by Grimes (1987)—should not be accepted in the absence of details. There are few acceptable records of vagrants of this species in West Africa.

Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus*

Accepted by Grimes (1987) as occurring in Ghana on the basis of its being listed as 'rare (seen regularly in small numbers)' in savanna in Mole NP by Greig-Smith (1976), with no indication that the latter was aware of how astonishing this would be, i.e. the first report from west of Nigeria. Grimes interpreted Greig-Smith's (1976) 'small numbers'

as meaning 'c.5 or less', and even attributed this to the race *nigricollis*, although neither specimen nor photographs exist. The only other observer to mention this species for Mole is Wilson (1993), who wrote: 'Appears to be widespread and common'. This species is quite unknown to the more experienced guards, two of whom were already working in Mole in the 1990s. It could, under certain circumstances, be confused with Yellow-billed Shrike *Corvinella corvina*, but both Greig-Smith (1976) and Wilson (1993) also listed that species. Given the very great zoological interest that an isolated population in Mole would represent, we believe proof is required before it can be accepted as occurring in the past. J. F. Walsh (*in litt.* 2007) never saw the species in Ghana when he was resident (1970–76), including in several days spent in Mole (1971–72, 1974–75 and 1979). Extensive surveys in 2004–05 have failed to locate any (RJD, FD-L). Ornithologists who have travelled widely in Ghana in recent years, in addition to ourselves, have failed to find the species (R. Cruse, D. Hoddinott, D. Moyer, A. Riley *in litt.* 2005–06). A sighting from an Accra garden (Rainey & Lachenaud 2002), if correctly identified, could only have been an escape from captivity, in this well-worked locality. As regards Ghana, we believe it should be retained in square brackets.

H. Schifter (*in litt.* 2003) has examined and published on the great majority of *Colius* museum specimens in existence; he has no proof of the occurrence of *C. striatus* anywhere in West Africa. Apart from the Ghanaian claims, there is a sighting by H. Rainey from Côte d'Ivoire: a group of at least five 'near a cocoa plantation south of Vavoua' (07°23'N 06°29'W), on 4 July 1998 (Rainey & Lachenaud 2002). The status in West Africa of what is normally an easily observed species remains a mystery.

Lyre-tailed Honeyguide *Melichneutes robustus*

One was reportedly seen at Nkwanta, Ankasa (05°10'N 02°39'W) and 'the distinctive trumpeting display' heard once at Boin-Tano (05°29'N 02°39'W), presumably in August 1989 (Dutson & Branscombe 1990). G. Dutson (*in litt.* 2007) informs us that this was not his record (we have been unable to contact J. Branscombe). Ntiamao-Baidu *et al.* (2000a) list it as present at one forest site, without giving details. No-one else has

reported this species, and so we believe the records remain to be confirmed.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Greig-Smith (1976) listed it as 'seen regularly in small numbers' in bovals in Mole NP, and although he gave no supporting details, this was accepted by Grimes (1987) as the first and only record for Ghana. This was clearly a misidentification of Sun Lark *G. modesta* (not listed by Greig-Smith), which RJD & FD-L found to be common on all bovals visited in Mole, in August 2004 and March 2005. Birds were singing on the ground and aerially, occurring in pairs and groups of up to six. In West Africa, Crested Larks are confined to extensive sandy plains in the Sahel, and have never been observed on laterite bovals within the Sudanian region.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*

Grimes (1987) accepted a sighting from the Keta Plains north of Srogboe. Whether this would be a Palearctic migrant (the date is unusual, 22 May) or an intra-African vagrant (local populations are essentially montane in West Africa), we prefer to retain such a record in square brackets, as some species of pipit are very difficult to identify.

Yellow-bellied Bulbul *Chlorocichla flaviventris* and **Yellow-streaked Bulbul** *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus*

Ntiamao-Baidu *et al.* (2000b) claimed from Atewa the first occurrence in Ghana of 'Yellow-bellied Greenbul *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus*', combining the English name of *C. flaviventris* with the scientific name of Yellow-streaked Bulbul. In an unpublished, undated annual report of the Ghana Wildlife Society the same bird is treated as both Yellow-bellied Greenbul *C. flaviventris* (p. 9) and Yellow-bellied Greenbul (*sic*) *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus* (p. 37). In another paper Ntiamao-Baidu *et al.* (2000a) listed *P. flavostriatus* as present in at least two forest sites, without giving details. Either species is impossible in Ghana: the *Chlorocichla* is a bulbul of dry thicket in the Zambezian and coastal regions of southern Africa; the *Phyllastrephus* is confined to the montane and some lowland forests of eastern Africa (from the Albertine Rift to South Africa).

Tiny Greenbul *Phyllastrephus debilis*

Van den Brink *et al.* (1998: 48–49) trapped and ringed three bulbuls at Ayensudo (05°09'N 01°28'W) and Piase (Pease: 06°38'N 01°27'W) which they listed as this East African coastal species. B. van den Brink (*in litt.* 2005) informs us this was a slip for Little Greenbul *Andropadus virens*.

Equatorial Akalat *Sheppardia aequatorialis*

Ntiama-Baidu *et al.* (2000b) claimed (as a first for Ghana) *S. aequatorialis*, collected in a mist-net at Atewa. In another paper, Ntiama-Baidu *et al.* (2000a) listed the species as present in at least two forest sites, without presenting details. This akalat is an Afromontane endemic with a very small range in eastern Africa (from the Imatong Mts., in southern Sudan, to the Albertine Rift and western Kenya). It is clear that this was a misidentification of *S. cyornithopsis* (see the Additions section above).

Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis*

Grimes (1987) accepted sight records from Mole NP, but we did not find it there and neither have other recent observers. We know of no other record in this part of West Africa south of Gonse (Gonsen), Burkina Faso (12°40'N 01°25'W) (B. Portier *in litt.* 2004), and thus prefer to place this species in square brackets. Confusion with Senegal (Green-backed) Eremomela *E. pusilla* is always possible.

Chattering Cisticola *Cisticola anonymus*

Although listed for Ghana in some old publications, it has been shown that the only specimens claimed were undoubtedly mislabelled, and from Nigeria not Gold Coast (Lindsell 2007). The species is listed as occurring at one 'forest site' in Ghana (Ntiama-Baidu *et al.* 2000a), but with no indication that the observers were aware of how unusual this would be, and no details of where and how identified. Competent observers who know this cisticola well have failed to find it in Ghana.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*

All Ghanaian specimens are in fact Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca* (L. Svensson *in* Urban *et al.* 1997: 503), and this is doubtless true also of the sight records, as anticipated by Grimes (2005). There

are few authentic records of *F. albicollis* in Upper Guinea, and it is readily confused with its siblings *F. hypoleuca* and Semi-collared Flycatcher *F. semitorquata*.

Cassin's Malimbe *Malimbus cassini*

Reportedly seen in five different places (Macdonald & Taylor 1977, Dutson & Branscombe 1990), and the well-worked Kakum NP (R. Cruse *in* Bull. ABC 10: 59). Aware that this Lower Guinea species is unlikely to occur in Ghana, it has been suggested they might in fact be Ibadan Malimbe *M. ibadanensis* (R. Cruse). Neither of these identifications is correct, and birds seen several times at Kakum and attributed to either species were in fact Crested Malimbe *M. malimbicus* (R. Ntakor pers. comm., present on some occasions). At Tafo, the site of some of Macdonald & Taylor's observations, a presumed *M. cassini* was seen in January 1978 by J. F. Walsh (*in litt.* 2005), who sent us a written description that accords well with a juvenile *M. malimbicus* ('above black with red crown and nape, continuous with bib. Face, chin and throat black').

Red-headed Malimbe *Malimbus 'coronatus'*

This Lower Guinea species was listed for Kakum (Moyer 1996: 109), but this must be a slip of the pen, through confusion with the English name of *M. rubricollis*.

A number of the species reported from parts of northern Ghana by Mombu *et al.* (2007) and the Nature Conservation Research Centre (2002) would be new for the country, but we have reservations about their accuracy, and no identification details are given.

Acknowledgements

For discussing various observations we are grateful to Phil Atkinson, Clide Carter, Richard Cruse, Ron Demey, Guy Dutson, Lincoln Fishpool, Jon Fjeldså, Llew Grimes, David Hoddinott, Sveinung Hobberstad, Dave Moyer, Robert Ntakor, Ben Phalan, Bruno Portier, Adam Riley, David Shackelford, Herbert Schifter, Tony Traub-Evans, Bennie van den Brink and Frank Walsh. Field work by RJD and FD-L in 2004–05 was undertaken as part of the IUCN/WDSP project, and thanks are due to Wildlife Division staff at Accra and the team leader, Peter Howard, for much practical assistance. For authorisation to undertake research in 2008 we

thank Nana Kofi Adu-Nsiah, Executive Director of the Ghana Wildlife Division, and his colleagues.

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- ^aLe Pouget, 30440 Sumène, France. E-mail: Dowsett@aol.com
- ^bPO Box 732, Accra, Ghana. E-mail: Andrew.Hester@sgs.com

Received 24 October 2007; revision accepted 23 May 2008.